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## COUNSEL TO THE CONVICTED.

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You acknowledge the existence of God, and your accountability to him; that he is righteous, and that sin is wrong and without excuse. You acknowledge that the law of God is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good; that you have broken the law, and are condemned by it as a transgressor. You are aware that the wages of sin is "death"—that death which stands over against the "eternal life" which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ, and that you lie under this condemnation, in your sins, exposed to the righteous inflictions of violated law.

The more you reflect upon the subject, the more your sins rise up to condemn you. They present themselves in every direction, under every form of thought and conduct, and in every degree of aggravation and guilt—law violated and authority unheeded,—the goodness and long suffering of God abused,—a hard and impenitent heart persisted in against all the overtures of mercy, and a poignant conviction that you have "trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite," you fear, "to the Spirit of grace;" and you cannot rest: a sense of guilt and deserved wrath forbids it. Once you were "alive without the law," but not so now. The desperate wickedness of your heart and life is discovered to you; the commandment has come; sin has revived; and you appreciate, in some measure, your condition, as one that is "dead in trespasses and sins." Weighed down with a sense of guilt and condemnation, you exclaim, *Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*

But conviction does not bring peace. You are not reconciled to God. Conscience does but forbode indignation and wrath as the portion of your cup at the hand of Him who is holy and true. You dare not go back; to stay where you are, you know, is death; and urged

by the solemnities that surround you, and the deep compunctions of your spirit, you ask, with the convicted jailer, "SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?" I answer,

1. *Carry your case to God.* Acknowledge all your sin and guilt to him. Pour all your convictions into his ear, and spread before him all the terrors and burdens of your soul. Your sin is committed against *him*. It is the violation of *his* righteous law—rebellion against his rightful authority—disobedience to his most holy will—the rejection of his infinite claims upon you; and he has a right to know, from you, your most inward convictions, and your whole soul in relation to it. All your way in transgression has been against God, and you ought at once, and like a child, to acknowledge all before him. There tell the story of your guilt, and with the deepest contrition and the most heartfelt sorrow and penitence, confess all your unworthiness in his sight. Reason teaches this, and this course you would take if you had wronged an earthly friend, or you would not expect forgiveness from him, or reconciliation to him, or an unburdened conscience. Equally indispensable is the same course in our relations as sinners against God; and in respect to this you have, as yet, wholly failed. You have not brought your state and wants before God. You have not come to him, in penitent acknowledgment of your sin, and confessed, in brokenness of spirit, your transgressions against him. You have not opened the fountain of your grief and tears before the throne. You have not unbosomed yourself there. Hitherto you have turned away from God, and kept your convictions and anxieties to yourself, or made them known only to others like yourself. You have not acted the part of a child in this matter. You have not said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son:" "against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

Perhaps you forget that God is on the throne of grace, that he has provided a Saviour, and in infinite compassion promised life to the penitent, returning sinner. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure

in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his wicked way and live." "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." From some cause, you do not throw yourself into the arms of the ever-blessed God himself, who only can forgive sin. You feel guilty and self-condemned, and, it may be, smitten to the earth by the multitude and enormity of your sins and the exceeding wickedness of your heart; and yet you do not come and take refuge in the mercy of God, and you are not comforted. Forgiveness seems far from you. Your conscience is not relieved. Your sin is unpardoned; your load of guilt and condemnation yet remains, and presses with continually increasing weight upon your soul, and it ever must while you stay away from God.

2. That you *have no righteousness of your own before God*. Seek not to justify yourself at the foot of the throne, or to palliate your offences, or to turn away from a full conviction of your ruined condition by sin. Acknowledge, without reserve, the claims of the law of God upon you, and the justice of your condemnation as a transgressor. Give up the controversy with God, and as a lost and helpless sinner, who has forfeited every thing, and might justly be cast off for ever, throw yourself wholly upon his mercy. There "all our hopes begin." It was "when we were without strength" that "Christ died for the ungodly." We must go wholly out of ourselves for the ground of pardon and acceptance with God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and thy truth's sake," is the song of all the ransomed of God. It is the theme of the Christian in all his earthly pilgrimage, and he enters into rest, exclaiming, "*I'm a sinner saved by grace.*"

3. *Rely on Christ*. He is the only Saviour, his death

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the only expiation for sin, the only channel of the mercy of God. Without it forgiveness would be impossible, and our fallen world be without help. But God has laid upon him our iniquities, set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, and revealed his righteousness, while he justifies him that believeth in Jesus. He is the "only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved," and in him only have we righteousness and strength. Place your dependence, then, wholly upon him; plead his interposition for sinners; his atoning merits as the ground of pardon, and come to God in his name. Knowing that it is by being forgiven all our sin, for his sake, that we are accepted and saved, receive him as a Saviour, acknowledge your indebtedness to him, and give him your heart. As your Redeemer and Lord, receive him; consecrate your heart, your soul, your life, your all to him. As one bought with his blood, ransomed from sin and hell by his death on the cross, cleave in child-like simplicity to him, and follow him in newness of life. *This* is believing upon him; this is accepting him as offered in the gospel. This cleaving to Christ involves repentance for sin and true humiliation before God on account of it; our dying unto sin and living unto God; conversion in the spirit of our mind, and our evangelical obedience. The sinner thus repenting, believing, returning to God by the gospel, meets the terms of forgiveness revealed in his behalf. Here the gushing waters of salvation flow to his soul. Here sin is forgiven; the controversy ceases, and reconciled and accepted, he becomes a child and heir of God, through grace.

You have the answer then, and you see the issue:  
*"This do, and thou shalt live."*

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